

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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NATIONAL SECURITY PLANNING GROUP MEETING

DATE: Friday, October 14, 1983
 LOCATION: White House Situation Room
 TIME: 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.
 FROM: William P. Clark *WPC*

I. PURPOSE

To review Secretary Shultz's memorandum and to discuss the major issues and the options we have for dealing with the Lebanese problem and the Middle East situation in general. This afternoon's NSPG will be devoted to a wide-ranging discussion of the problems and possible ways we have for dealing with them. We would propose that an NSPG tentatively scheduled for next Tuesday be devoted to decisions on where we go next and to get your approval of an action plan.

II. BACKGROUND

George Shultz has sent you a paper which is attached at Tab A. It is a review of the situation in Lebanon and the many problems and issues we face in advancing our objectives there and in the broader arena of the Middle East. I believe the paper is balanced and that it will be very useful in preparing principals for tomorrow's NSPG. Before that NSPG, we have scheduled a morning meeting for you with George and Bud McFarlane (11:00-11:45 a.m.) to bring you up to date on Bud's mission and prospects for the immediate future.

As we approach these crucial meetings, it is important to be clear as to the real choices we face. One way or another some new power sharing arrangement in Lebanon is almost certain to come about. The question is whether the Syrians will dictate the outcome--with all this would imply for our own credibility and posture in one of the world's most vital regions. Although we will be discussing a variety of complex, specific options, the real choice is whether we are prepared to face up to the requirements of preventing such an outcome or whether under the aura of a successful cease fire agreement we should look for ways of distancing ourselves from the political struggle in Lebanon.

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Withdrawal of foreign forces is still a central objective, and withdrawal of Israeli forces may help to remove Syria's fig leaf for staying in Lebanon. But isolation and Arab pressure alone will not be enough to drive the Syrians out; this is because Syria's position in the Arab world has long been built on intimidation, not consensus. Also, while the Saudis have been helpful to date, there are limits to what they can now do; indeed; they may increasingly side with the Syrians in pressing the Lebanese government in ways that cut against our interests. None of this should deter us from staying the course, but we need to disabuse ourselves of illusions and look coldly at the requirements for success.

The agenda at Tab B is detailed and complex, but I believe it must be so to focus our discussion in the limited time we have allotted. The discussion should be structured to allow first a review of the internal Lebanese situation and how we can help to foster and accelerate the process of national reconciliation. We would then turn to issues which are external to Lebanon but have important bearing on the internal situation. Foremost among these is the isolation of Syria from the various Lebanese factions as well as from the moderate Arabs who might accede to Syrian leadership if Assad gets his way in Lebanon. We will also take a hard look at our next steps with the Israelis and consider whether we couldn't get more flexibility from Israel if we enhanced our strategic cooperation in light of the growing Soviet-Syrian menace to our shared interests. (This is, of course, consistent with the larger strategy contained in NSDD-99 which is summarized at Tab C.) We should also examine the implications of the sale of the French strike aircraft to Iraq and the future course of the Gulf War. Syria's continued support for Iran in a widened conflict might provide us opportunities to further isolate the Syrians (and the Libyans) as we undertake to reassure our Arab friends in the Gulf. Finally, we want to look at how we might deal with the current PLO crisis, reenergizing the Hussein-Arafat dialogue, and the prospects for enlisting Arab support for Egypt as an offset to Syrian leadership of the Arab world.

Attachments

- Tab A - Shultz Memo on Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East
- Tab B - Detailed Agenda for the NSPG
- Tab C - Summary of NSDD-99

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